

HON. ALEX. MACKENZIE HIS LIFE AND TIMES &

DEBT - 1892



HONORABLE
ALEX. MACKENZIE
HIS
LIFE AND TIMES.

WM. BUCKINGHAM.
HON. G. W. ROSS, LL.D.





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HON. ALEXANDER MACKENZIE.





THE
HON. ALEXANDER MACKENZIE.
HIS LIFE AND TIMES.

BY
WILLIAM BUCKINGHAM,
PRIVATE SECRETARY,
AND
HON. GEO. W. ROSS, LL.D.,
MINISTER OF EDUCATION, ONTARIO.



Toronto:
ROSE PUBLISHING COMPANY.
C. R. PARISH & COMPANY.
1892.

Entered according to the Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-two, by the ROSE PUBLISHING COMPANY, at the Department of Agriculture.

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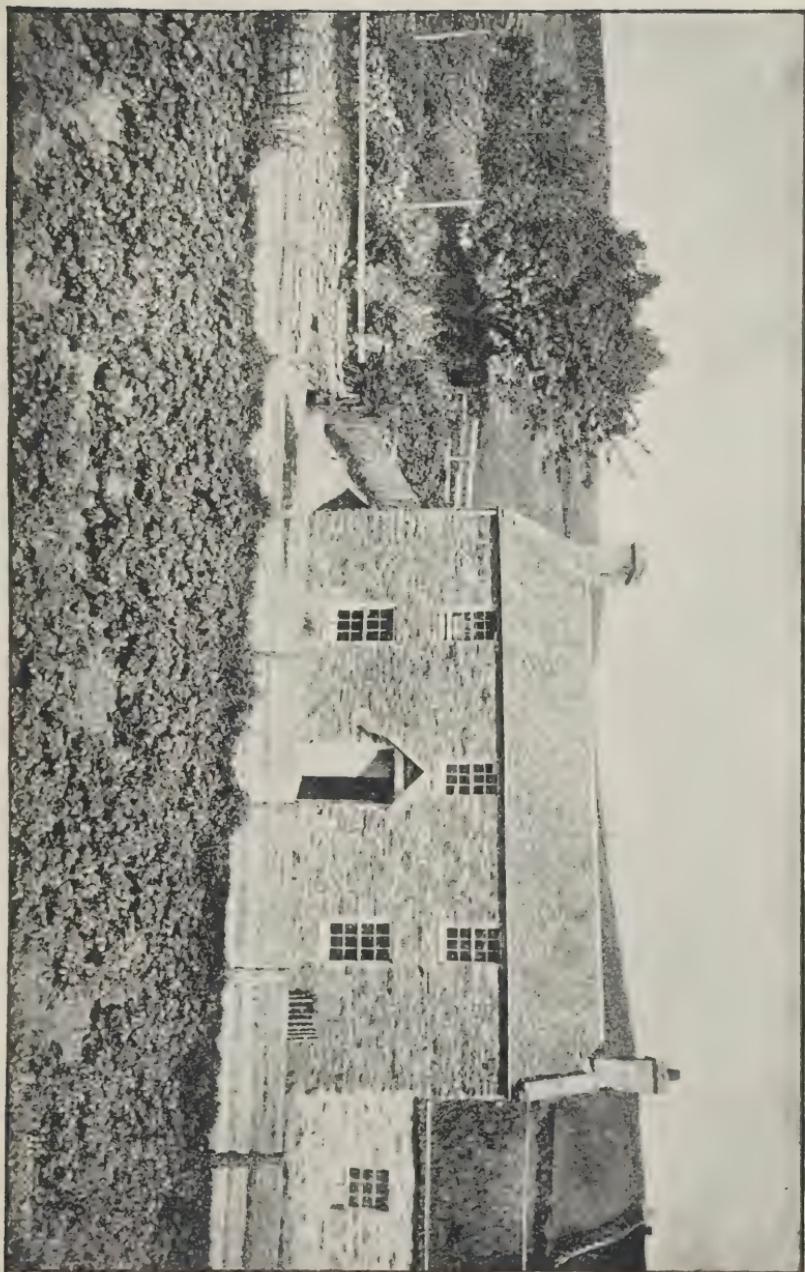
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House at Logierait, Scotland (still standing), where Mr. Mackenzie was born.





INTRODUCTION.

THE history of an individual is often the history of a nation. The domination of a single mind may determine for centuries the course of a nation's life. The mere statement of this proposition calls up such names as Cromwell, Chatham, Peel.

The writer of biography is not, however, an historian. He has to do with the forces which make history rather than with history itself. He has to look from the effect to the cause—from the cleft sea to the wondrous rod in the leader's hand. The effect of social environment on the subject of his narrative, the influence upon him of education, of business, of wealth or of poverty, he is bound to consider; but while doing so he is ever conscious of the fact that many millions of the race whose biographies, happily, have not been written, were similarly conditioned. He finds that thousands of American citizens toiled upon the farm and split rails as did Abraham Lincoln; yet only one of these thousands became President of the United States. Scotland had generations of peasant ploughmen: yet only one was a Robert Burns. England produced many novelists and brilliant adventurers, yet only one ever became Premier. Why this discrimination is what constantly occurs to the biographer. Is it owing to native

talent? If so, how did that talent first express itself? How was it first discovered? Or, was success owing to some adventitious circumstance, which would be equally effective in securing distinction for the many thousands whose names have passed into oblivion.

The subject of this memoir was not presented to the world as an object of admiration, because of ancestral lineage or rank. No doubt his presence gladdened his Highland home, as such "sweet pledges of immortality" gladden other homes. At his father's fireside, or at the parish school, he was like other boys. It seems no one in early life smoothed down his flaxen curls, and whispered in his ear, prophetically, the story of his future greatness. Not even when toiling in the "bothy" with his fellow masons, did any prescient comrade see in him the germs of statesmanship; and yet there must have been at work even in those early days that hidden growth of mind and character, which afterwards developed into a great leader of public opinion. How strange is destiny! See in the humble stonemason, shaping, with mallet and chisel, the roughgranite of his native country into the stately column or the well-proportioned capital, a future Premier of Canada, shaping the policy of a great country, and giving it an enduring name among the nations of the world, and explain in advance, if you can, how it is to be brought about.

Mr. Mackenzie's early days in Canada were as uneventful as his Scottish life. Like thousands of others, who clambered over the bulwarks of an emigrant ship to seek subsistence in the colonies, he came unheralded. His was no well-filled purse. He had no letters of introduction to men of wealth or influence. He bowed at no man's door for preferment. But though his wealth did not consist in current coin of the realm, yet he was not poor. He had a trade; he had health;

he had self-reliance ; he had energy ; he had character ; and with such possessions who would call him poor ? Without waiting for anybody to take him by the hand, he applied himself to his trade. What he thought of his new home at that time, no one can now tell. It may be he often longed for his native hills—for the dreamy twilight of the summer months—for a sight of his Scottish home—for his friends. Or it may be, that he saw the great possibilities of the land of his adoption, although still held by nature in its rugged grasp. Whatever may have been his thoughts, certain it is, he was no laggard. "Whatsoever his hand found to do, he did with all his might," unobtrusively and unostentatiously. For nearly twenty years after his arrival in this country, he was, in the strictest sense of the term, a working-man—all honour to him. But, while toiling with his hands, his mind was active. He combined with the dignity of labour, the thoughtfulness of the student. He felt he was a citizen, not an alien, and that as such his country had claims upon him.

The questions engaging public attention were peculiarly congenial to a man of his temperament. Upper Canada, which contained the great bulk of the English-speaking population, had just been united to Lower Canada as a counterpoise to the influence of the French race. Responsible government, the great balance-wheel of the British constitution, was on its trial, and, in spite of partisan governors and cabinets, promised well. The commercial growth of the country sought freer channels with the United States in the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854. Religious liberty and equality were clamouring for the secularization of the clergy reserves and the abolition of rectories. The advocates of a broader education were appealing for the establishment of free schools. Great issues were before the country—issues which, to Mr. Mackenzie, were fraught with

momentous results, and which, no doubt, gave the direction to his political career. As a nonconformist in Scotland, knowing and feeling the disabilities under which nonconformists laboured, not only in the United Kingdom, but in every colony of the Empire, he could, without reserve, take up the policy of the Liberal party on that question.

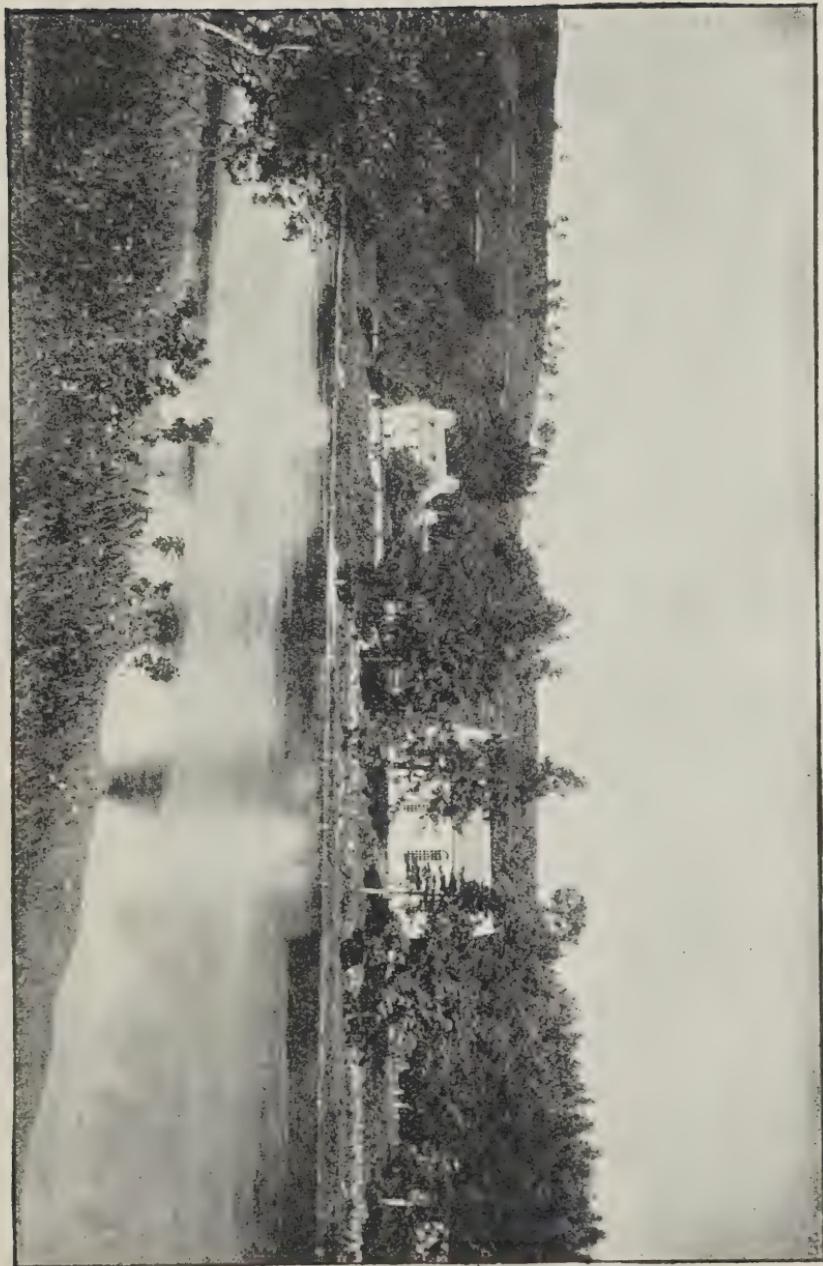
His great leader, Mr. Brown, had said in 1851 : “ By means of Church Endowments, church has been set against church, “ family against family, sectarian hatred has been fostered, “ religion has been brought into contempt by the scramble for “ public plunder, and infidelity has been in no small degree “ promoted by the sight of men preaching one day the worth-“ lessness of lucre, and battling in the next to clutch a little of “ that same commodity, though gained by the grossest partiality “ and injustice—and all this to serve the cause of religion.”

With these sentiments he heartily coincided. To fight the battles of the Liberal party, then, was simply to express his own convictions. And every one who heard him speak in those days felt that he was not the mere champion of liberalism, but an embodiment of liberalism itself.

Long before Mr. Mackenzie entered Parliament, his ability as a debater was recognized by all who knew him. His stunning blows and corrosive humour were felt and feared by every antagonist. With a courage that never quailed, with a logic as inexorable as one of Euclid’s demonstrations, and in language, simple, exact and forcible, none the less effective because of its Scottish accent, he would tear into tatters the arguments of the enemy. The interruptions of his opponents but assisted in their discomfiture, for he was a master at repartee, and no one ever crossed swords with him, without realizing that he had a foeman worthy of his steel.

But these were only the training days of the young athlete;

Parish Church and Manse, Logierait, (the Birth-place of Mr. Mackenzie), Perthshire, Scotland.

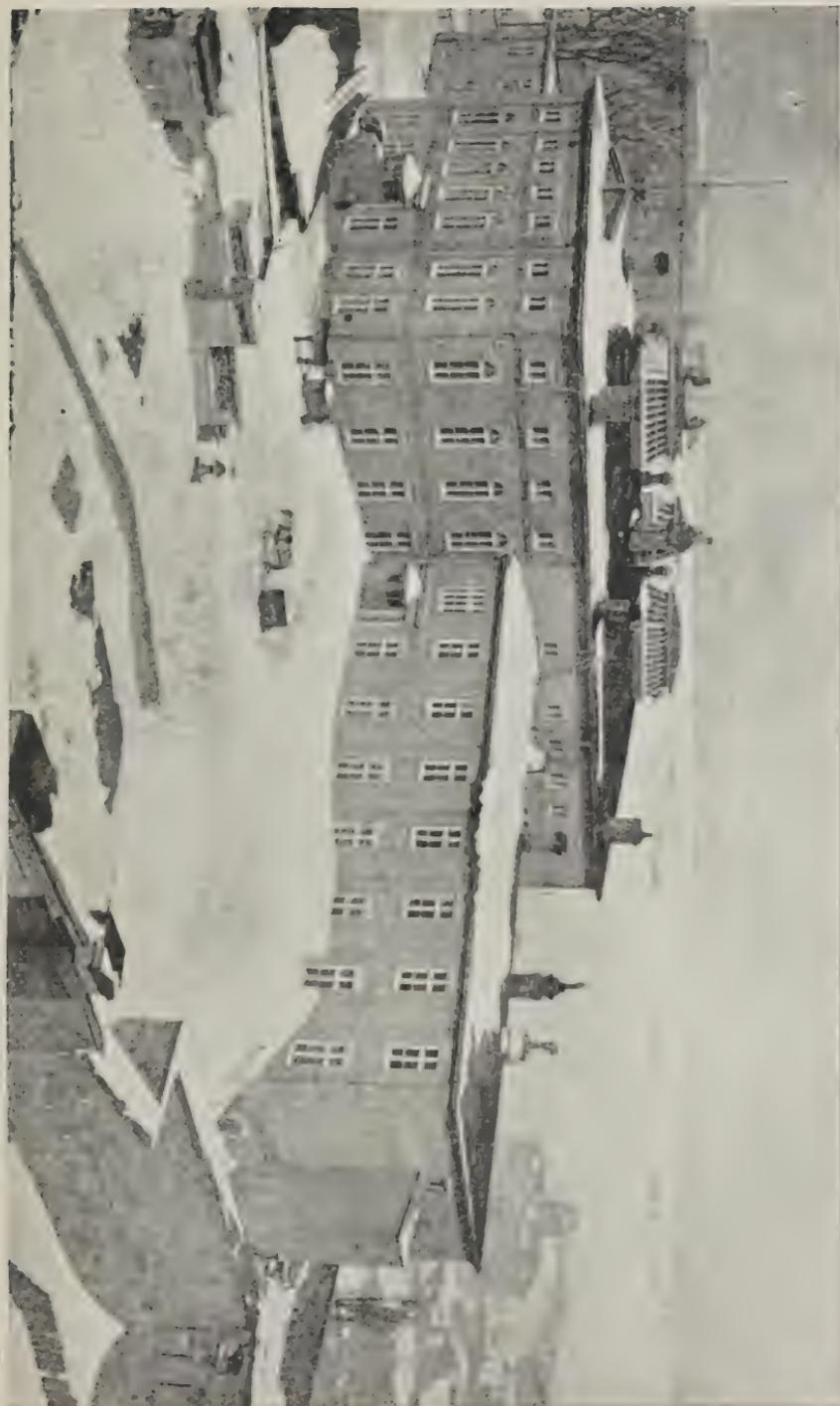


he had not reached the maturity of his power, although he entered Parliament in his thirty-ninth year. The great demand upon his time and physical strength by his vocation made it impossible for him to give much time to public matters. His whole attention was now, however, at least for a considerable portion of the year, to be given to politics. He was brought face to face with men who directed the public opinion of the day. He had a parliamentary library at his elbow, and it remained to be seen whether the platform champion of the rural school-house and the dimly-lighted town-hall would hold his own with the Ruperts of parliamentary debate. His friends had not long to wait. Modestly, but with an unaffected consciousness of power, he took part in the debates; and Parliament, with its traditional consideration for young members, heard him with respect.

* * * * *

In 1864, he was a member of the committee that drafted the resolutions which led to Confederation. In 1865, he was asked by Sir John Macdonald to join his government. In 1867, he was the acknowledged leader of the Liberal party, and in 1873, just eleven years after first subscribing to the roll as a member of parliament, he was premier of Canada. Few men, even with the assistance of wealth and social position, can furnish such a record. Of him it may be truly said,

“ We build the ladders by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And we mount to the summit round by round.”



The Old Parliament Buildings, Quebec City.



CHAPTER XVI.

MACKENZIE AND PROVINCIAL POLITICS.

Mr. Mackenzie Elected for West Middlesex—Defeat of the Sanfield-Macdonald Administration—Mackenzie a Member of the New Government—His Position in Local Politics—Speech as Provincial Treasurer—Dual Representation Abolished—His Choice of the Commons.

IN order to give colour to the “no-party” cry on which Sir John Macdonald was appealing to the country in 1867, he secured for the Hon. John Sandfield Macdonald, a well-known Liberal, the appointment of Premier of Ontario, it being well understood between them that a coalition Government would be formed for the Province of Ontario, and that both should appeal for support on the same “No-party” cry. The object of this arrangement was to divide the Liberal party, Mr. Sandfield Macdonald expecting that with the aid of his Liberal colleagues, Wood and Richards, he would carry the Liberals of the Province; while his Conservative colleagues, Carling and Cameron, would swing the Conservatives into line. This move, which was to benefit himself, was also to be of service to Sir John Macdonald.

For a time the leadership of the Opposition was entrusted to Archibald McKellar, the sturdy member for Kent. But before the first session of the House expired, it became quite evident that Edward Blake, who represented West Durham in the House of Commons and South Bruce in the Legislative

Assembly, was the foremost member of the House on either side, and entitled to the first place in the Liberal ranks. He was accordingly elected leader, and entered with great energy on the discharge of his duties. It is but fair to the Government to say that it was economical and progressive. Mr. Sandfield Macdonald was not a statesman, although a good administrator. He was a man of good business habits, tenacious and aggressive, and always repelled, with great vigour, the attacks of his opponents. By his economy, he accumulated a large surplus. How to invest this surplus, in such a way as to meet the necessities of the people, and develop the resources of the province, was, apparently, the worthy purpose to which he applied himself. With the character of these investments, no fault can be found; for instance, the establishment of the agricultural college, the institute for the deaf and dumb, the institute for the blind, the central prison, the erection of new asylums, and the granting of aid to railroads, were all commendable, and in harmony with Liberal ideas. But, when it appeared that these institutions were distributed as a reward for political support, that his scheme for aiding railroads was likely to be used for a similar purpose, and when, above all, it appeared that his influence as a Liberal was used to keep Sir John Macdonald in power, the revolt of the Liberal party against his government was complete.

In the general election, which followed the close of the first parliament, Mr. Mackenzie was the unanimous choice of the Liberal party in the west riding of Middlesex. As in the case of his first election in the county of Lambton, he had no desire for nomination. The House of Commons was in session at the time, and his duties as leader of the Opposition demanded his closest attention. It was felt, however, by the Liberals in the riding that with him as candidate they were

sure of victory. He accepted the nomination with great reluctance and threw himself into the contest with his usual energy. The day of March was the polling day, and as the winter broke up somewhat earlier than usual, the roads were almost impassable. Nevertheless, mounted on horseback, with a trusty Liberal as his guide, he canvassed the riding from end to end, holding two meetings a day, organizing .. the party and making havoc of his opponents wherever he met them. Never was he more vigorous, more buoyant, or perhaps more successful. He was received everywhere with the greatest enthusiasm. His straightforwardness, his wonderful grasp of every question discussed, his incisiveness and lucidity as a speaker, impressed the electors as they were never impressed before. So thoroughly did he capture the hearts of the people that many Conservatives voted for him, and when the votes were counted it was found that West Middlesex, which gave Mr. Currie a majority of in the previous election, returned Mr. Mackenzie by a majority of





The Casket in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sarnia.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sarnia.



CHAPTER XXIII.

LAST YEAR OF POWER.

His Last Session as Premier—Visit to the Maritime Province—His Defence of His Government—The National Policy—Attitude of Manufacturers—His Contests with Sir Charles Tupper—General Character of the Campaign—The 17th of September, 1878—His Resignation.

THE opening of the last session of the House of Commons over which Mackenzie presided as Premier took place amid considerable contention. The Speaker, Mr. Anglin, had resigned his seat as member of parliament, because of an inadvertent violation of the independence of parliament. From the report submitted by the Committee on privileges and elections, it appeared that he was interested in a printing contract with the post office department, and had on that account forfeited his seat. Having been re-elected during the recess, his offence was legally condoned, but on his re-nomination for the Speakership by Mr. Mackenzie, Sir John Macdonald objected on technical grounds that, being a new member, he was not known to the House until introduced by two members, according to the practice of the English House of Commons, and not being known he was not eligible for election as Speaker. It was shown in reply to Sir John's objection that the practice in Canada was different from the English practice—that in England members were sworn in before the Speaker, while in Canada they were sworn in before the clerk of the House, and

that, if evidence were submitted, that a member was duly elected and had taken the oaths, his right to his seat could not be questioned for the time being. Mr. Anglin's return was laid on the table by the clerk ; he was duly sworn in, he had, therefore, all the rights of a member. Sir John, however, pressed his objection and divided the House.

Early in the session Mr. Mackenzie informed in the House, according to usage, of the changes made in the administration during the year: First, the Hon. Mr. Cauchon, Minister of Inland Revenue, was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, and Mr. Wilfrid Laurier was selected to fill the vacancy. The Hon. Mr. Vail, Minister of Militia, having resigned his seat because he, too, was inadvertently interested in a contract, Mr. Alfred G. Jones, member for Halifax, was appointed in his place. The Hon. Edward Blake, Minister of Justice, was obliged to retire on account of his health. In speaking of the retirement of Mr. Blake, Mr. Mackenzie said : " I cannot but express my extreme regret that I should be compelled to part with a colleague with whom I have acted all my political life, under whom I once served when he acted as Premier of Ontario, and who acted so cordially with the present administration since his advent to office. * * * * There was no difference in any matter of policy between my hon. friend and his colleagues, and I am quite sure that the restoration of his wonted health will give pleasure to almost every one in Canada who takes an interest in the retention of men of great ability and high personal character in the councils of the country." By these changes, with the exception of the loss of Mr. Blake, Mr. Mackenzie materially strengthened his Government. Mr. Cauchon had been a source of weakness to him from the very beginning, although he, at one time, rendered great service to the Liberal party as editor of the *Journal de*



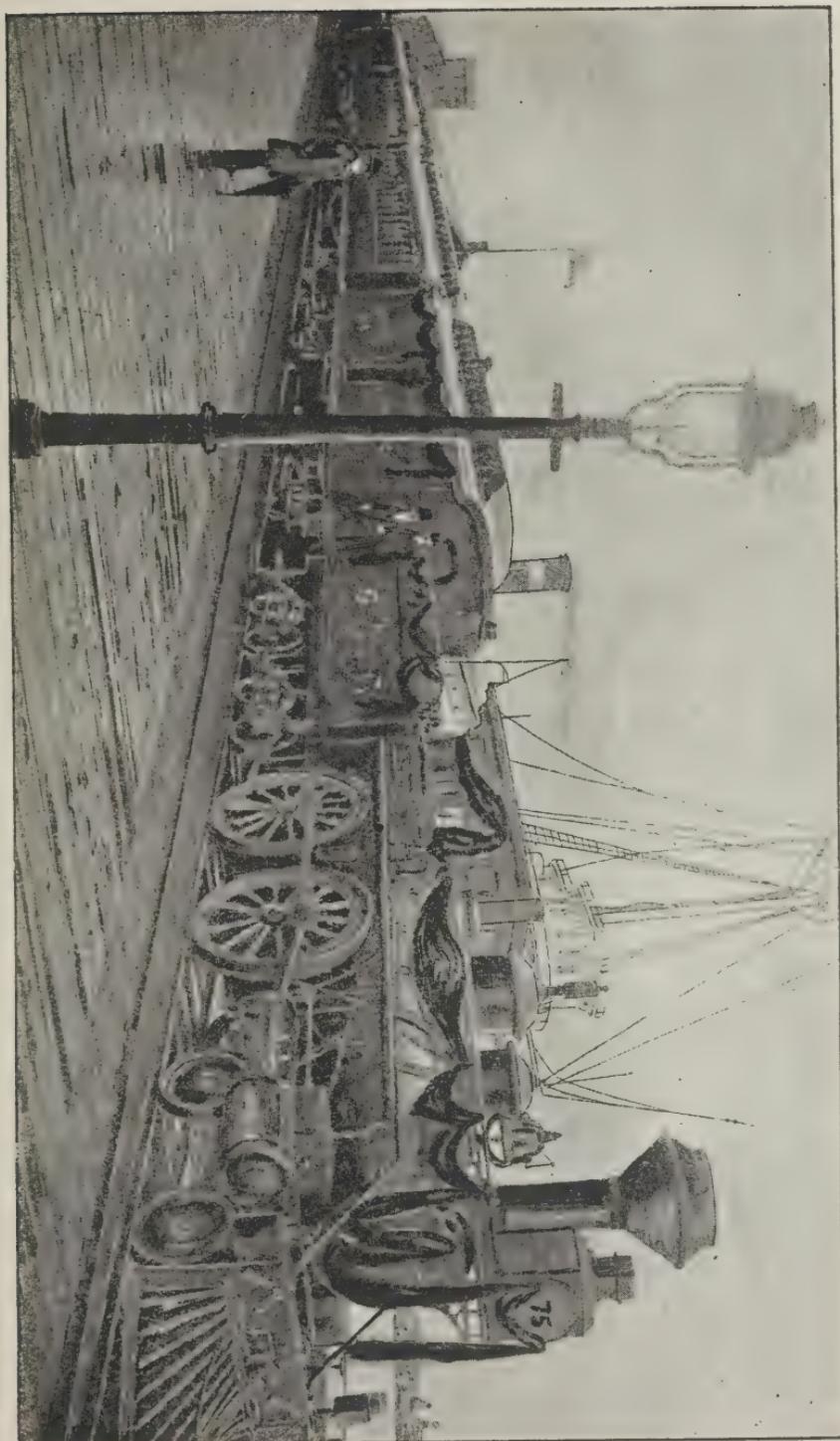
Family Burial Plot in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

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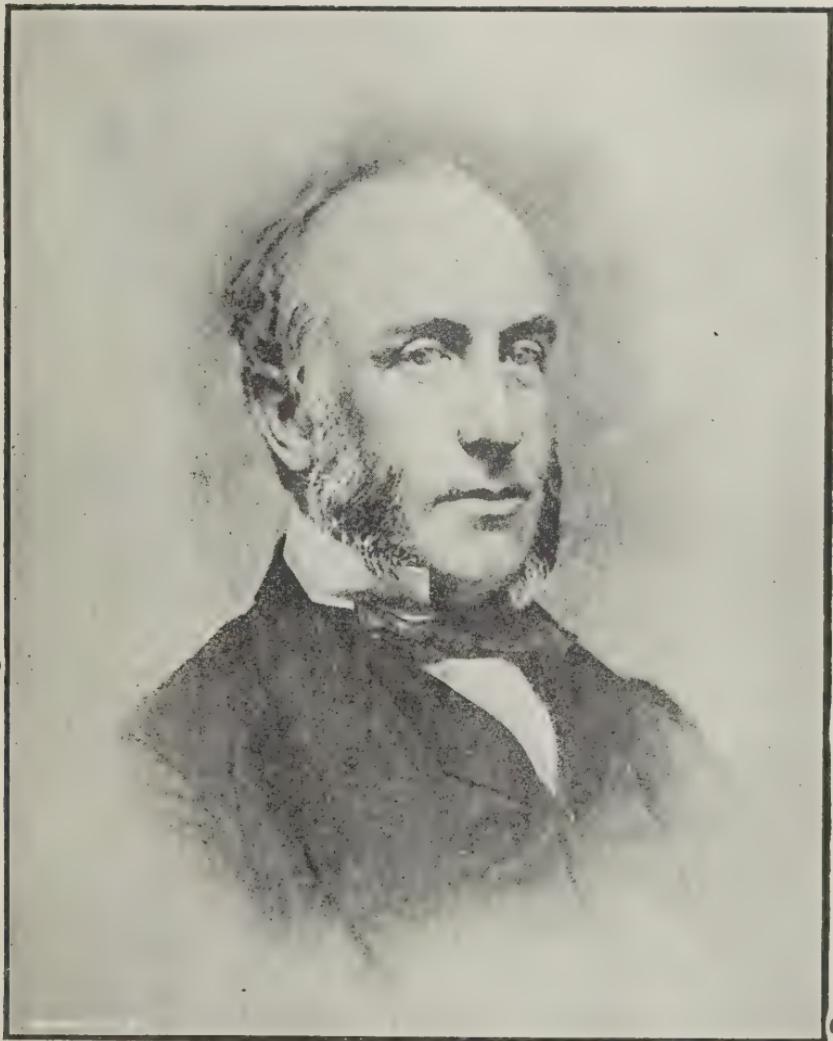
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Quebec, and as a pamphleteer. He was, however, of little use to Mr. Mackenzie either as a debator or as an administrator, and it was hard to forget his unsavoury record in connection with the Beauport asylum. Mr. Wilfrid Laurier was an acquisition, and his early advancement to a seat in the Cabinet—for he was then in his twenty-seventh year—showed Mr. Mackenzie's appreciation of talents, which have since secured for the young Minister of Inland Revenue the leadership of the Liberal party of Canada. The exchange of Mr. Jones for Mr. Vail was a decided acquisition. The maritime provinces have given to Canada many men of great ability and worth, but few among them deserve a higher position for their integrity, their breadth of mind, and their high sense of honor than the Hon. Alfred G. Jones. Mr. Blake's loss was almost irreparable, and, although his place was filled, with considerable ability, by Mr. Laflamme, from the Province of Quebec yet it was felt on all sides that the House had sustained a great loss from the temporary withdrawal of the leader of the Canadian bar from the Department of Justice.





The Funeral Train, G. T. R. Station, Sarnia.



Hon. George Brown.



M-NCC

Hon. Edward Blake, P.C., Q.C.



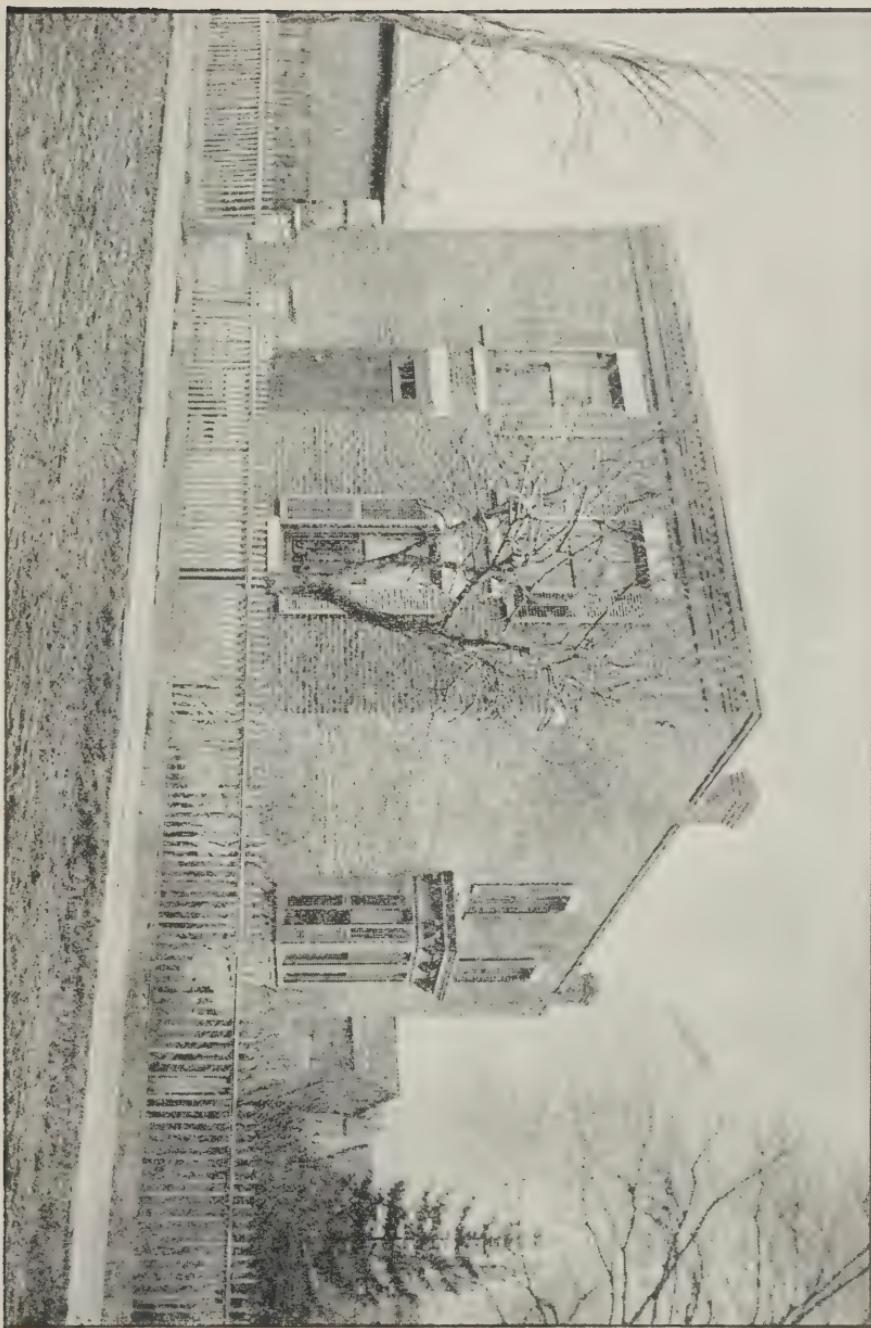
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Right Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald, G.C.B., P.C., LL.D., D.C.L.

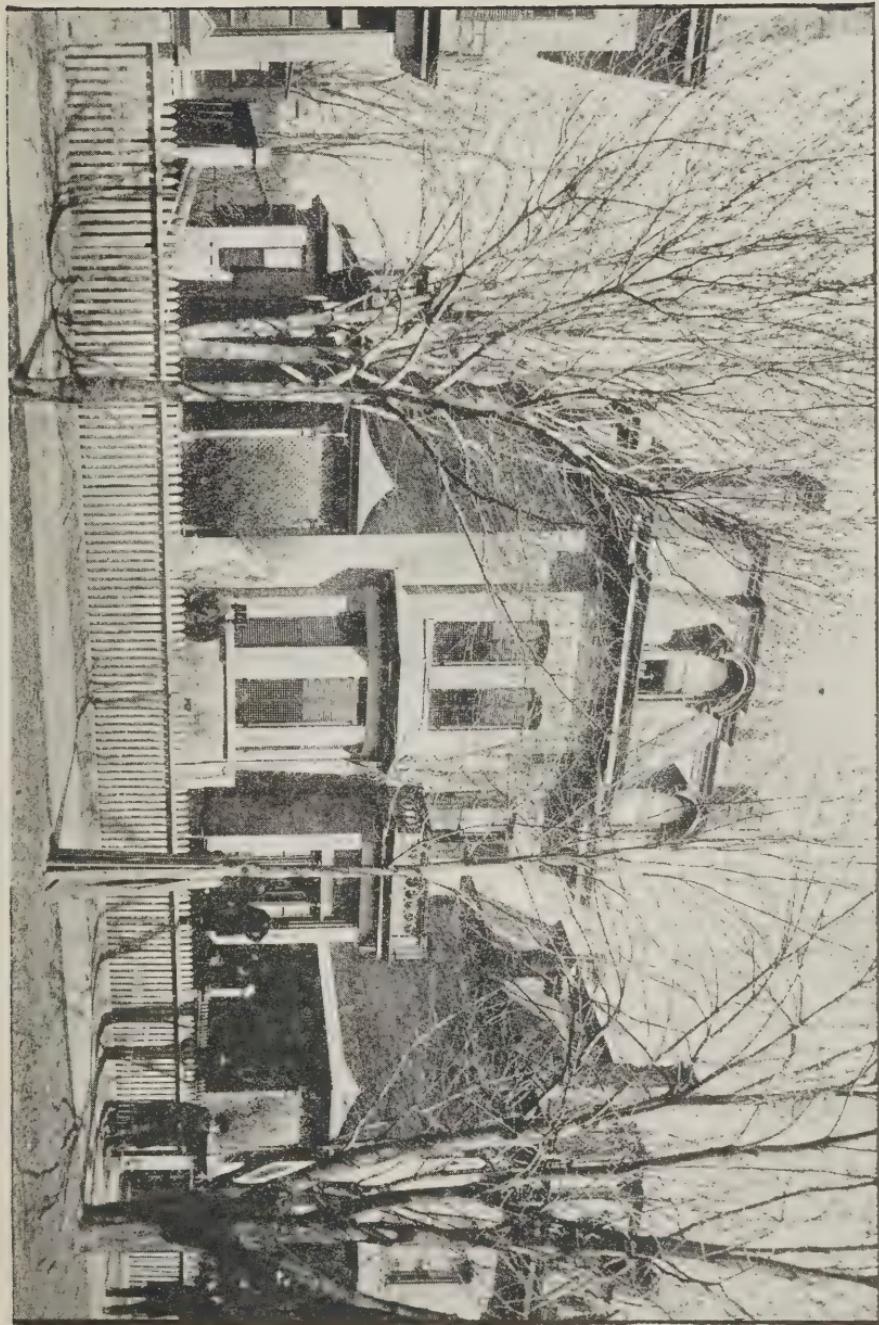


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Hon. Oliver Mowat.



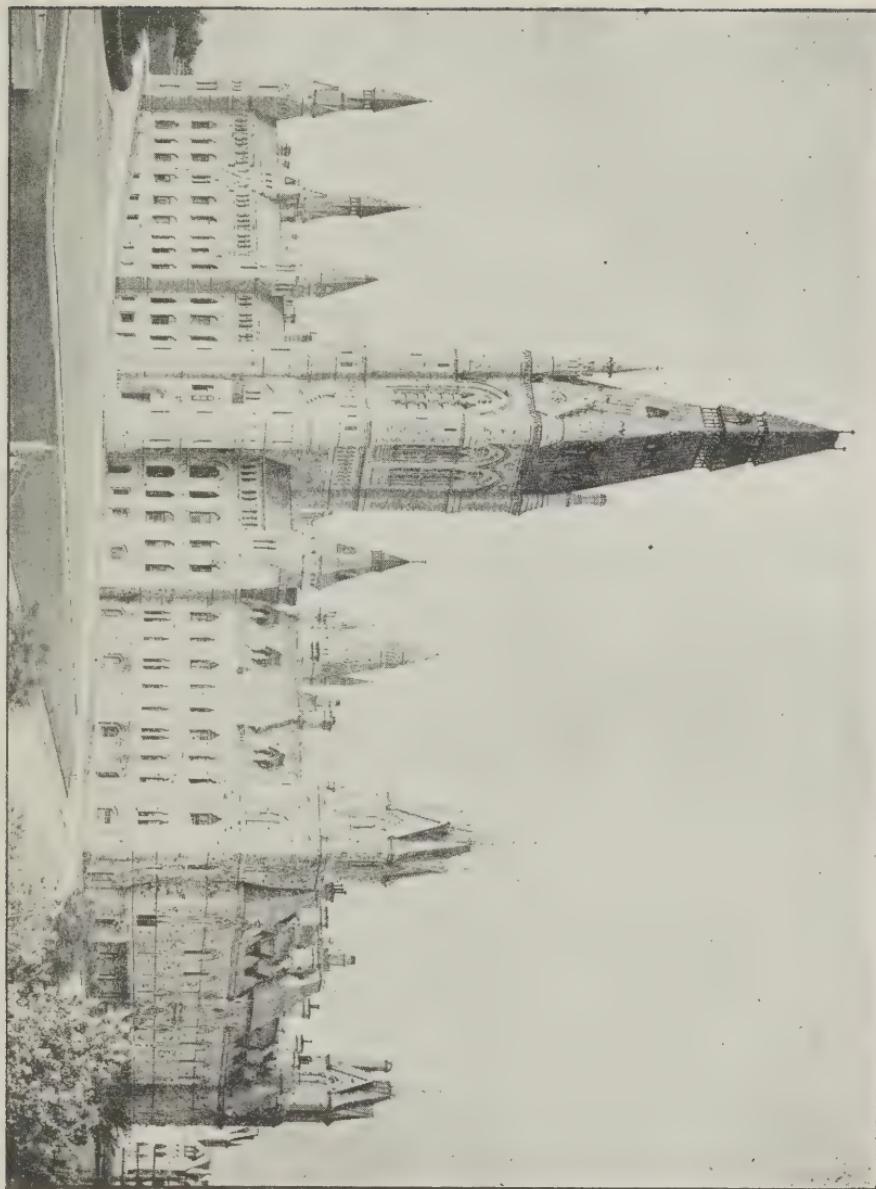
Hon. Mr. Mackenzie's Old Home, Sarnia.



Hon. Mr. Mackenzie's Residence, Toronto.



Mrs. Mackenzie.



The Mackenzie Tower—Western Block, Ottawa.

THE LIFE

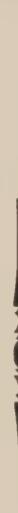
OF THE

HON. ALEXANDER MACKENZIE

AN AUTHENTIC BIOGRAPHY OF THE DECEASED EX-PREMIER

BY

W. BUCKINGHAM AND HON. G. W. ROSS



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